

Agenda Item No.8 (b)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNCIL

7 February 2018

Report of the Director of Finance & ICT

BUDGET CONSULTATION RESULTS

1 Purpose of the Report

To enable Council to consider the outcome of the Council's budget consultation exercises in formulating its budgetary proposals.

This report should be read alongside the following reports to this Cabinet Meeting: the Budget Monitoring Position for 2017-18; the Revenue Budget Report 2018-19 and the Capital Budget Report for 2018-19.

2 Information and Analysis

The Council has, for a number of years, undertaken a variety of consultation exercises, using a range of methods, in the preparation of its annual revenue budget. Last year, the Council received approximately 430 responses to its 2017-18 budget consultation, down from approximately 900 responses in the previous year. This year the Council has used alternative approaches to attract a higher number of responses to its 2018-19 budget consultation.

Participation has been encouraged using social media, including Facebook and Instagram paid-for campaigns, an organic social media campaign, using infographics, and a video and blog from the Council Leader. In addition, media releases, an e-mail to 737 Citizens' Panel members, e-newsletters to community groups, parish councils, partner organisations and community publications, features on the Council's internal and external websites and articles in Derbyshire Now, the Our Derbyshire employee newsletter and the employee payroll letter have been used.

To promote participation amongst residents who are less familiar with, or have no internet access, copies of a paper consultation questionnaire, containing the same questions, were distributed to libraries across Derbyshire. Library and Call Derbyshire staff were briefed. A freepost address was used to encourage participation.

The Council's online budget consultation went live on 28 September 2017 and ran for just over six weeks. By the closing date of 12 November 2017, 6,694

completed submissions had been received, which is a significant increase on previous years. Of the respondents, 6,043 live in the administrative county of Derbyshire and benefit from and are affected by the decisions the Council makes about financing its services. Only those responses from within the administrative county of Derbyshire have therefore been considered below.

The distribution of responses by the Derbyshire District or Borough Council area that participants live in has been compared to the latest Office of National Statistics mid-year population estimates for 2016 (ONS data). The proportion of responses from Derbyshire Dales and High Peak residents were approximately 6% higher than expected. Responses were approximately 6% lower from Erewash and South Derbyshire residents. The proportion of responses from Amber Valley, Bolsover, Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire residents were broadly in line with expectations.

The average age of respondents was 48 years. There was a good spread of responses across all age groups, with 44% aged between 45 and 64, making it the most common age group of those taking part. A further 34% of respondents were in the 25 to 44 age group. ONS data for Derbyshire has 63% of residents between the ages of 25 and 64, meaning that relatively more people of this age took part in the consultation than would have been anticipated, based on the actual age profile of Derbyshire residents. Of the remaining 22% of participants, 6% were under 25 and 16% were over 65 years old.

Male participants made up 45% of the total consultation respondents. This compares to ONS data where males comprise 49% of the Derbyshire population. The proportion of females taking part has increased from 46% last year, to 55% this year.

A total of 761 respondents (13%) identified themselves as having a disability, which is in line with the proportion of respondents last year. This compares to 20% of the population who are covered by the Equality Act.

Local people were asked five questions to establish their views on how the Council should spend its money, which services are important to them and which services they would spend the most, or less on, if they controlled the Council's finances. Participants were also asked what they thought about the amount of Council Tax they pay. It was explained that last year the Council raised Council Tax by 3.99%, which included an extra 2% specifically to fund and protect some Adult Social Care services for older and vulnerable people, in line with guidance from Central Government.

It was explained in the consultation that Cabinet Members will consider consultation responses alongside any legal and contractual reasons why the Council must continue to provide particular services, before firm proposals are drawn-up and considered and that further consultations will be held, when

local people will again get the chance to have their say about individual proposals before final decisions are made.

Of the five consultation questions, three required respondents to select their answers from options given in the consultation and two allowed respondents to comment freely. Over 3,000 comments were received for each of these questions.

In summary, local residents have the following views:

- 41% of residents were in favour of an increase in Council Tax of 1-2%, although 30% of respondents are not willing to pay any more and 29% are willing to pay an increase of 2% or higher.
- On average, females are less willing to pay an increase in Council Tax than males and younger people are less willing to pay an increase than older people.
- From a choice of sixteen categories, the top five to spend most money on, with the most popular listed first, are: repairing and improving the condition of Derbyshire roads, improving social care for vulnerable people, keeping children and adults safe, working efficiently and effectively and helping children and young people get the best start.
- From the same choice of sixteen categories, the least popular choices for spending less money on (effectively the least popular options for allocating savings) are consistent with the above, except for repairing and improving the condition of Derbyshire roads, which was sixth from bottom and working efficiently and effectively, which was actually the sixth most popular choice to spend less money on. Protecting local people and communities and transforming services for people with learning disabilities were also amongst the bottom five categories least popular for savings.
- The top priority for female expenditure is improving social care for vulnerable people and for males it is repairing and improving the condition of Derbyshire roads.
- The top five categories to spend less money on, with the category selected most listed first, are: promoting Derbyshire as a global cultural and tourist destination, encouraging healthy lifestyles, championing local communities, supporting local library services and unlocking economic growth and access to economic opportunities.
- This is consistent with the bottom five choices for spending most money on (effectively the most popular for savings), except for unlocking economic growth and access to economic opportunities, which was eighth from bottom. Being a good corporate parent for children in our care was also amongst the bottom five to spend most money on.
- The top priority for cutting expenditure for both males and females is promoting Derbyshire as a global cultural and tourist destination, closely followed by encouraging healthy lifestyles. There is more agreement between the sexes on spending less money than spending the most money.

- The most common other areas for the Council to prioritise expenditure on, identified by respondents, are education and youth activities, roads and street lights, efficiencies, mental health, public transport and staffing retention and support. The most common themes for Derbyshire residents' other suggestions to balance the budget were to increase efficiency, focus on management and staffing, target services most in need or where there is a statutory requirement to provide the service, work with partners and use volunteers, generate more income and cut Councillors and their expenses.

A detailed analysis of the consultation results and themes arising from the comments that participants contributed are in the Appendix to this Report.

Other Consultation

The Council's Constitution provides that the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee should also be notified of the budget proposals. The Director of Finance & ICT presented details of the Five Year Financial Plan to the Committee in September 2017. The proposals were discussed and there was a clearer understanding of the financial context in which the Council would be operating over the next few years.

The trade unions were consulted at the Corporate Joint Committee held on 11 January 2018. In particular the unions raised issues about the level of the pay award, business rates retention, council tax increases and the pressures on services.

In addition, the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires local authorities to consult representatives of business ratepayers in their area about the budget proposals for each financial year. A meeting with representatives of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses was held on 24 January 2018 and a verbal update will be provided at this meeting.

3 Financial Considerations

The outcomes of these consultations should be used to inform service planning and help determine budget priorities.

4 Legal Considerations

Members are invited to have regard to the advice contained in the Revenue Budget Report.

5 Equality and Diversity Considerations

In 2015 the Council developed a draft Community Impact Assessment. The assessment draws on Equality Impact Assessments, consultations and the wider contextual information available, including business cases for each budget proposal. This work is updated on a regular basis, more recently to include new and revised budget cut proposals and provides an overview of people and places where budget cuts proposals may have a negative impact, including those where the cumulative effect might be greatest. Geographical mapping of both proposed and implemented budget cuts, where appropriate, also supports this work which provides the foundations for the necessary programme of detailed Equality Impact Assessments. This ensures that decisions are informed by the fullest understanding of their effect on people and communities, as well as highlighting those groups which may need to be consulted on proposals as they emerge.

6 Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, human resources, environmental, health, property, transport and social value considerations.

7 Background Papers

Papers held in Technical Section, Room 137, County Hall.

8 Officer's Recommendation

That the views of the consultation respondents are taken into account by Council in formulating its proposals to Full Council regarding the Revenue Budget for 2018-19.

PETER HANDFORD

Director of Finance & ICT

BUDGET CONSULTATION

Detailed Results

2018-19

1 Introduction

A total of 6,694 people responded to the Budget Consultation. Each respondent was asked to provide a postcode for their home address and this postcode has been used to identify the local authority where respondents live. 6,043 of the respondents live in the administrative county of Derbyshire and of the remaining 651, there were 78 people who live outside of the county and 573 did not provide a postcode or gave an invalid postcode.

80 paper questionnaires were returned but only 59 of these have been included in the analysis. 15 respondents did not choose three priorities that they would spend 'Most' or 'Less' money on so they could not be included in the analysis and 6 forms were returned after the closing date.

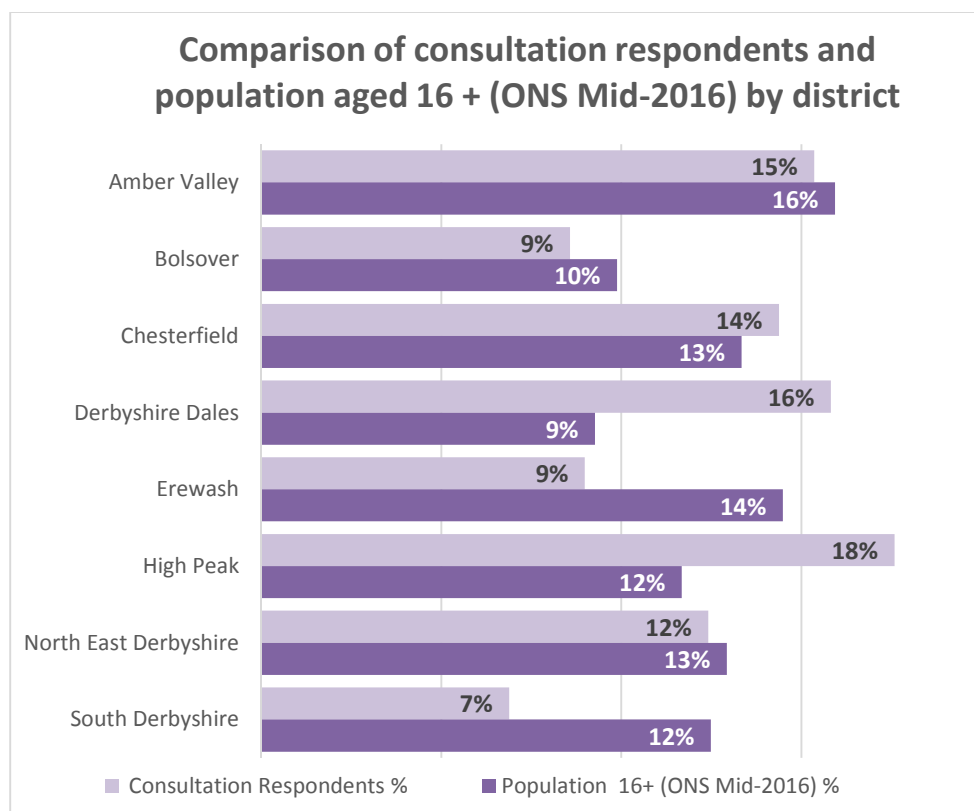
All the analysis included below looks at the responses of Derbyshire residents.

2 Demographic Profile

Residence

The distribution of residence of respondents living in Derbyshire is compared below to the distribution of the population aged 16+ according to the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year population estimates for 2016.

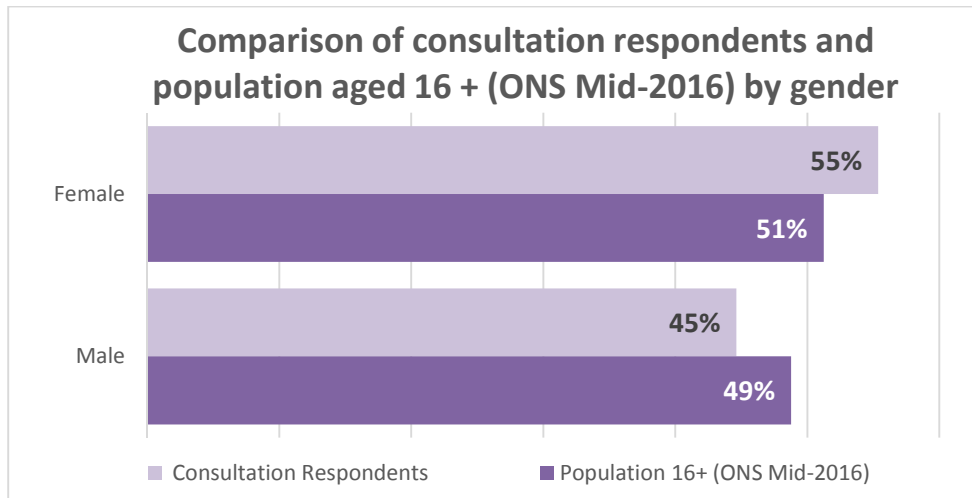
Figure 1: Derbyshire Respondents by District / Borough Council Area



Gender

The gender profile of Derbyshire respondents is compared below to the profile of all residents as given by the mid-year 2016 ONS population estimates.

Figure 2: Derbyshire Respondents by Gender

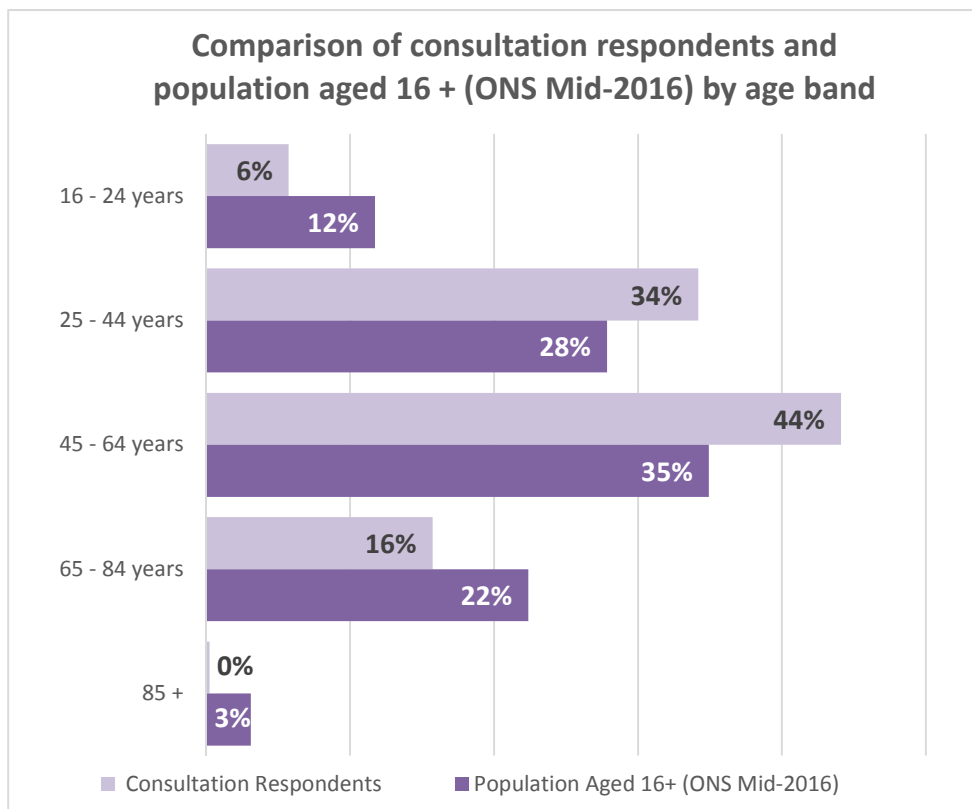


Age

The average age of respondents was 48 years.

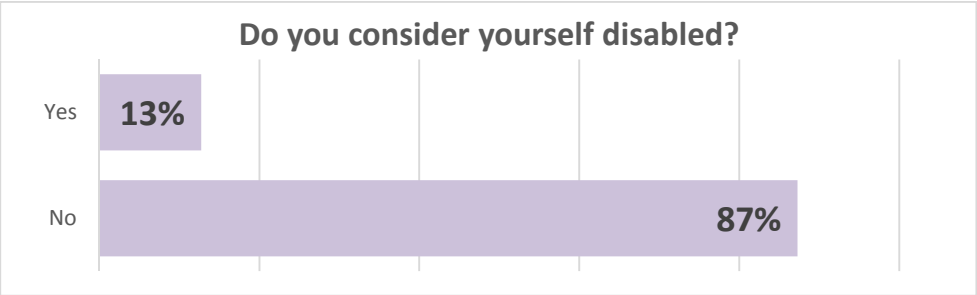
The age profile of respondents is compared below to the profile of all residents as given by the mid-year 2016 ONS population estimates.

Figure 3: Derbyshire Respondents by Age



Disability

Figure 4: Derbyshire Respondents by Disability



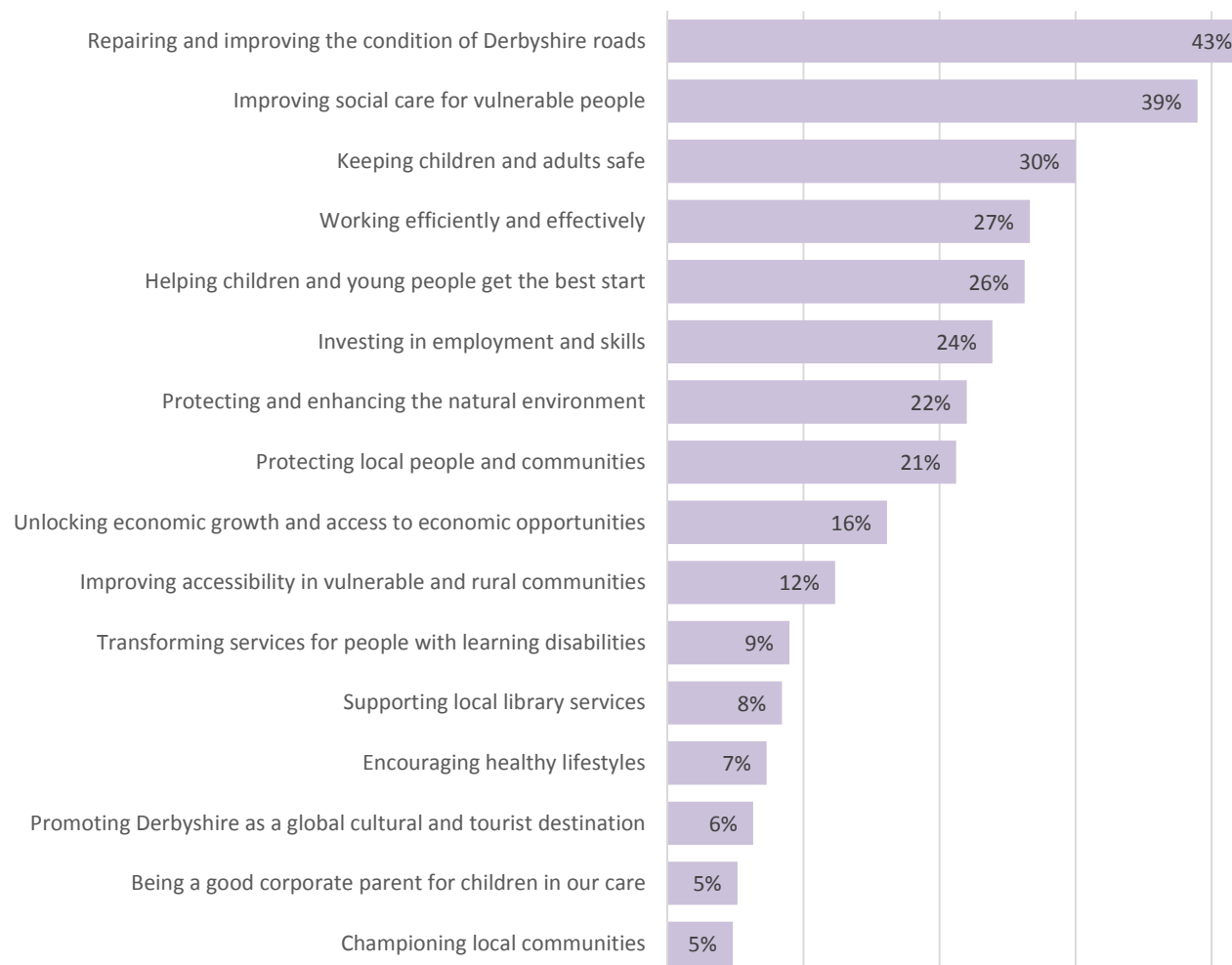
What do you think the Council should spend the MOST money on?

Figure 5: Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 1 – "What do you think the Council should spend the most money on?"

SUMMARY

Note: The responses sum to 300% as each respondent was asked to select three options

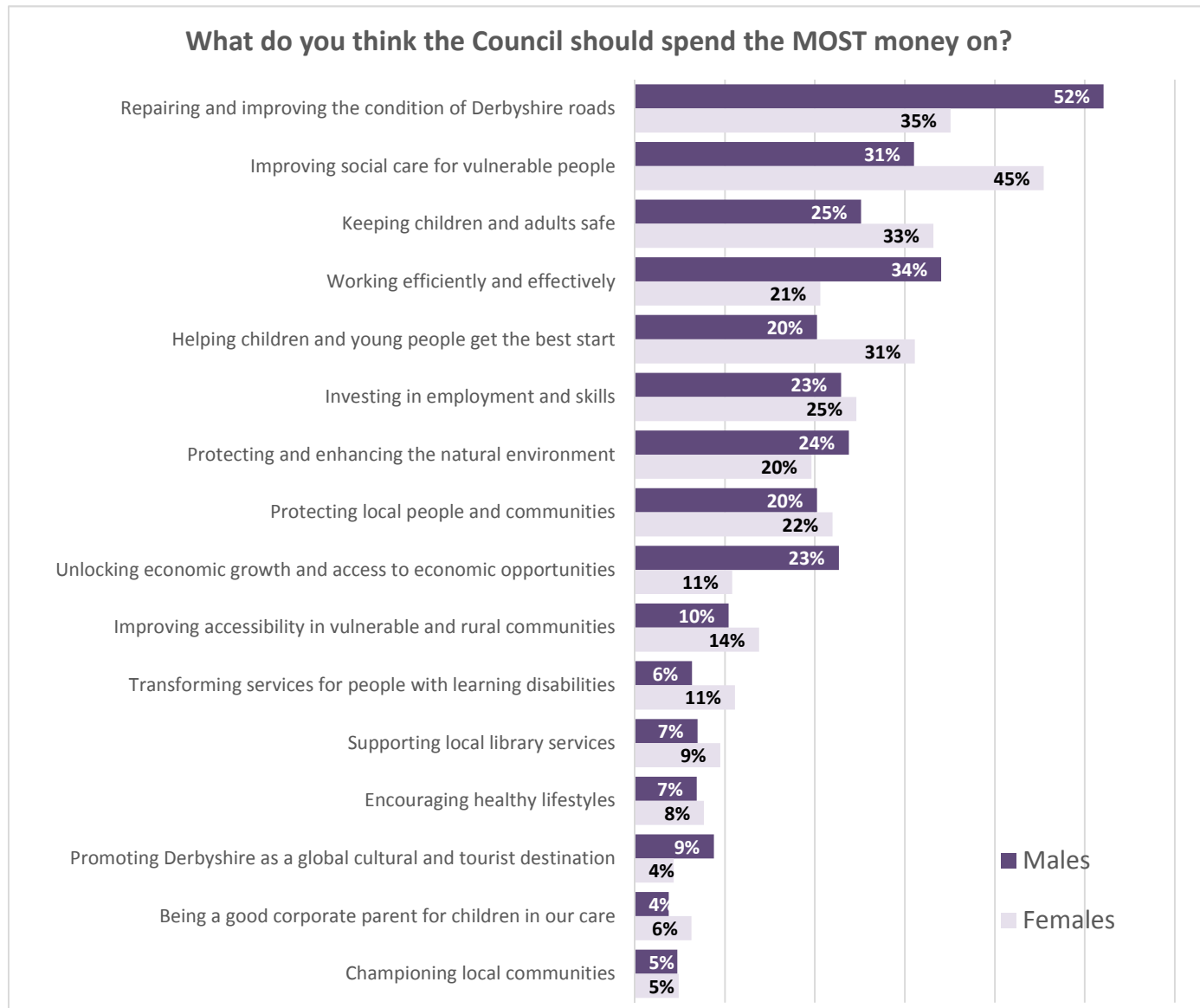


Figure 6: Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 1 – “What do you think the Council should spend the most money on?” BY GENDER

Note: The responses sum to 300% as each respondent was asked to select three options

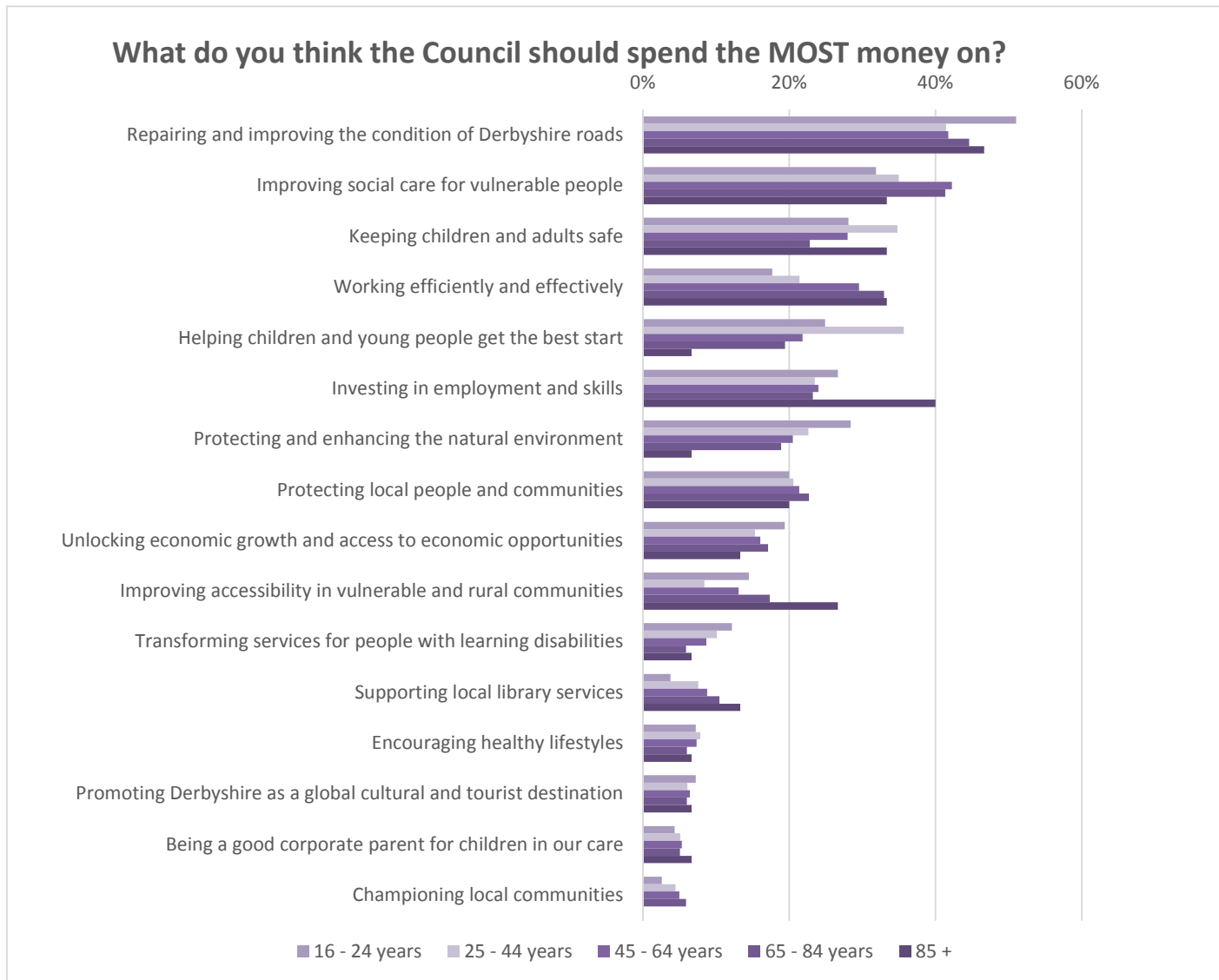


Figure 7: Derbyshire Residents' response to Question 1 – "What do you think the Council should spend the most money on?" BY AGE

Note: The responses sum to 300% as each respondent was asked to select three options

What do you think the Council should spend LESS money on?

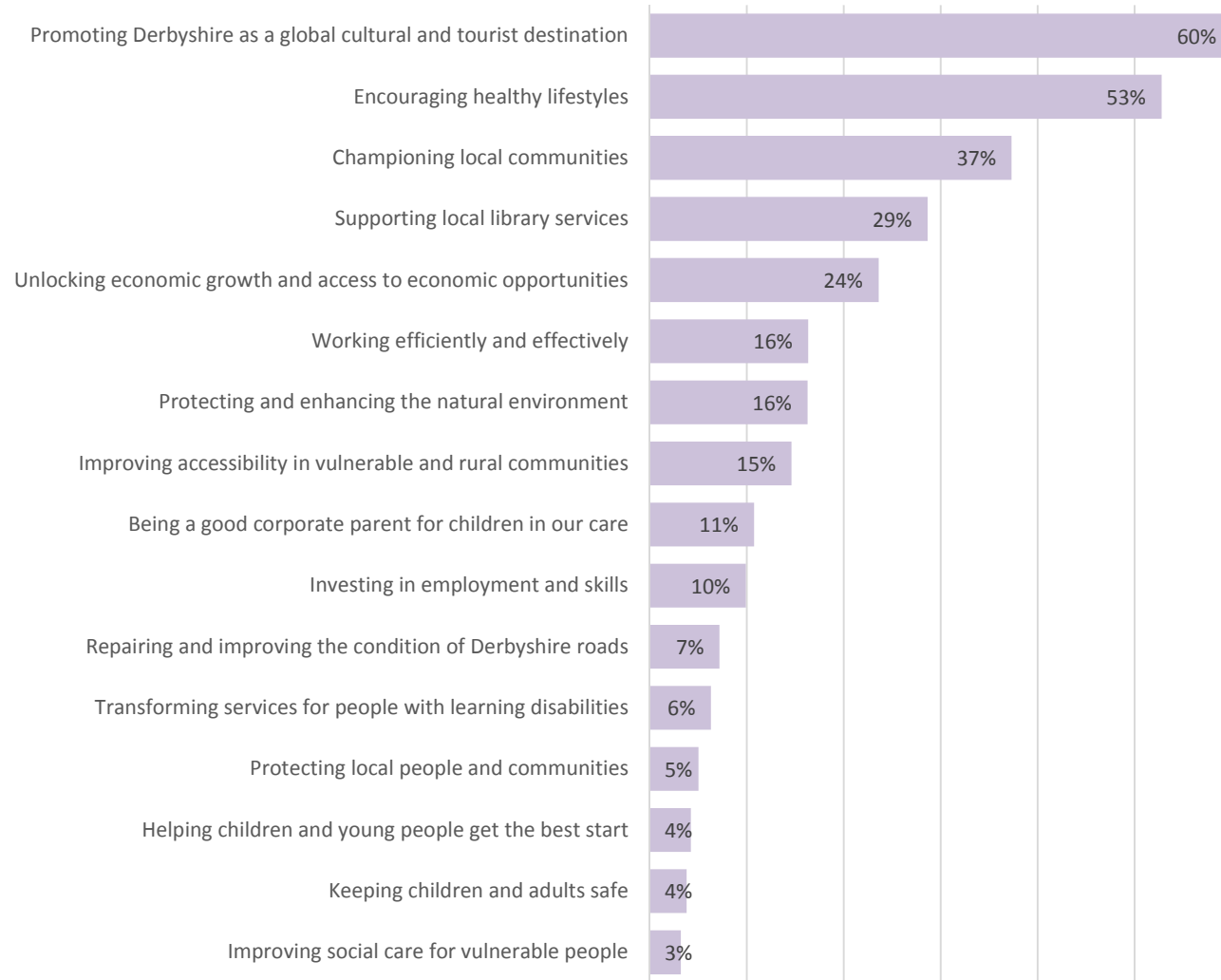


Figure 8: Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 2 – “What do you think the Council should spend less money on?”
SUMMARY

Note: The responses sum to 300% as each respondent was asked to select three options

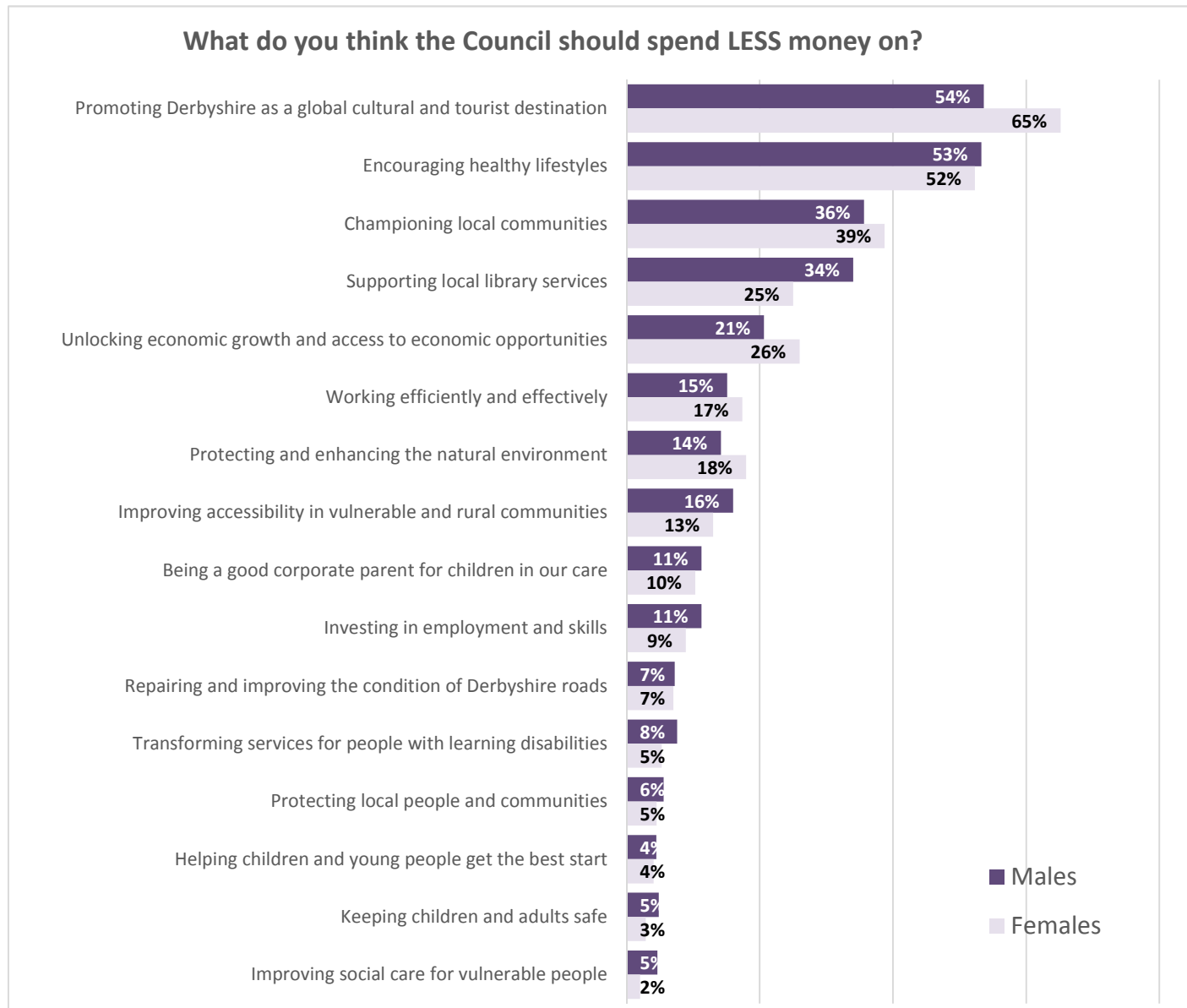


Figure 9: Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 2 – “What do you think the Council should spend less money on?” BY GENDER

Note: The responses sum to 300% as each respondent was asked to select three options

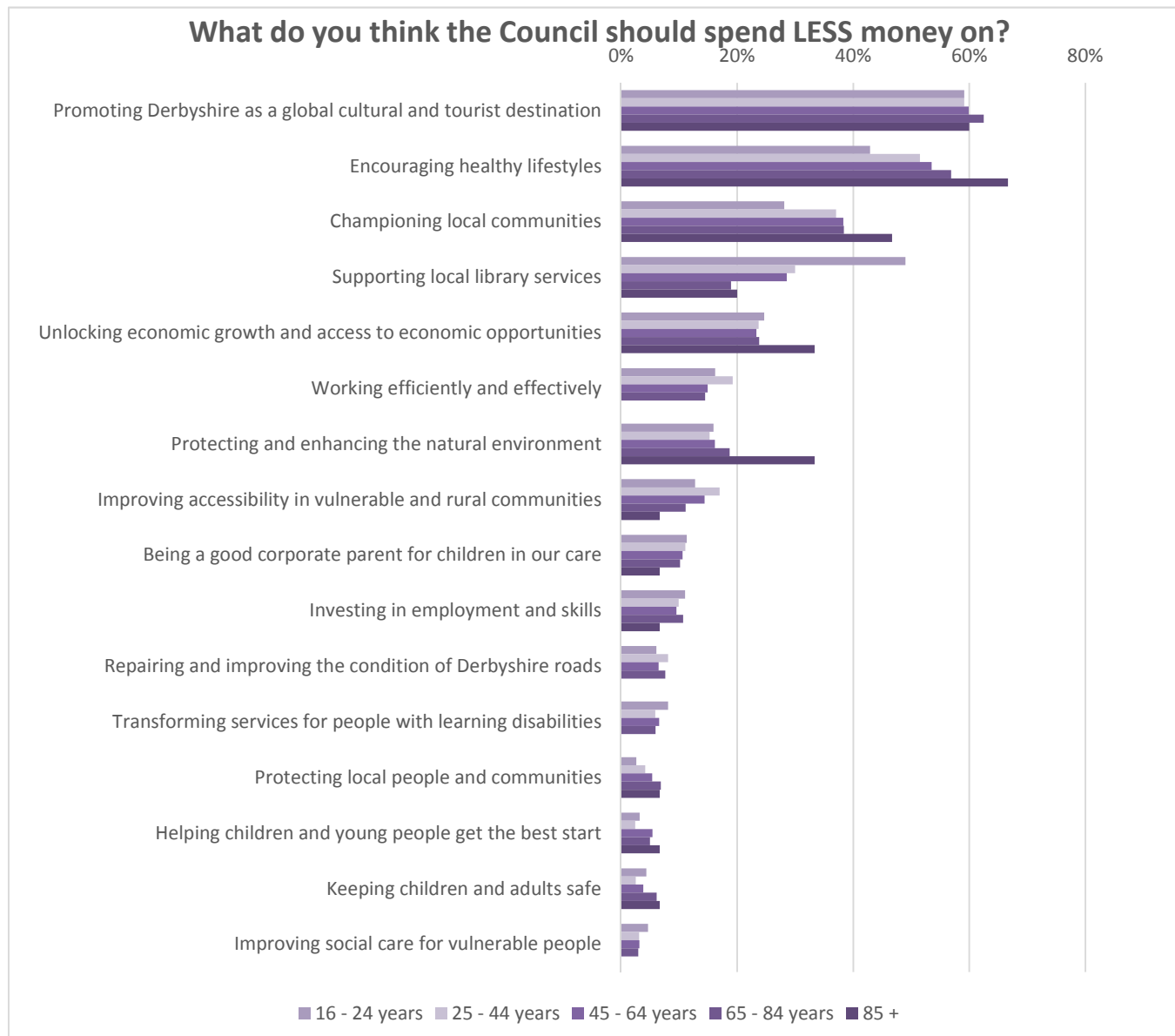


Figure 10: Derbyshire Residents' response to Question 1 – "What do you think the Council should spend less money on?"
BY AGE

NB The responses sum to 300% as each respondent was asked to choose three options.

Respondents were also asked whether there were any other priorities that they thought the Council should spend money on. 3,109 priorities were received from 2,695 Derbyshire residents.

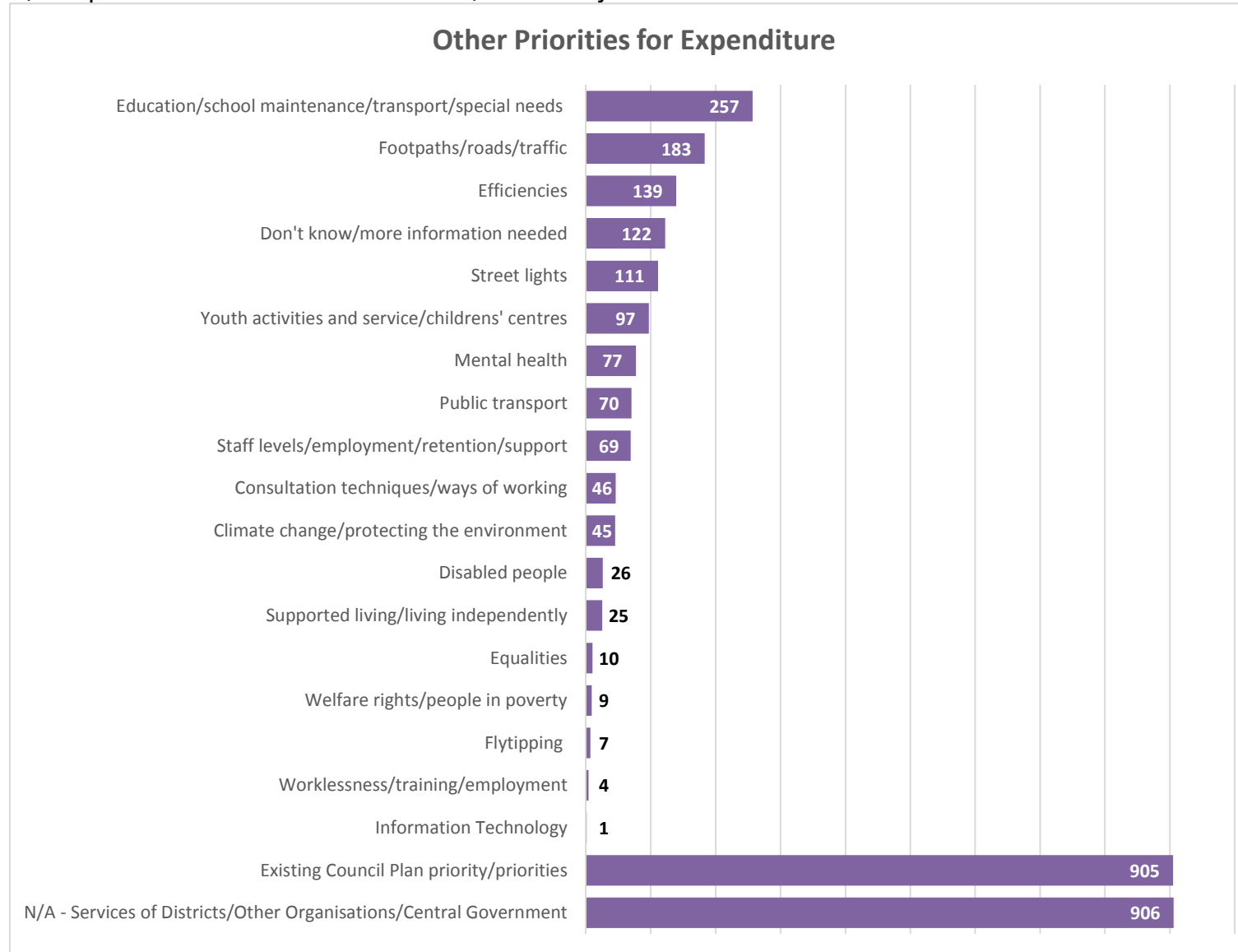
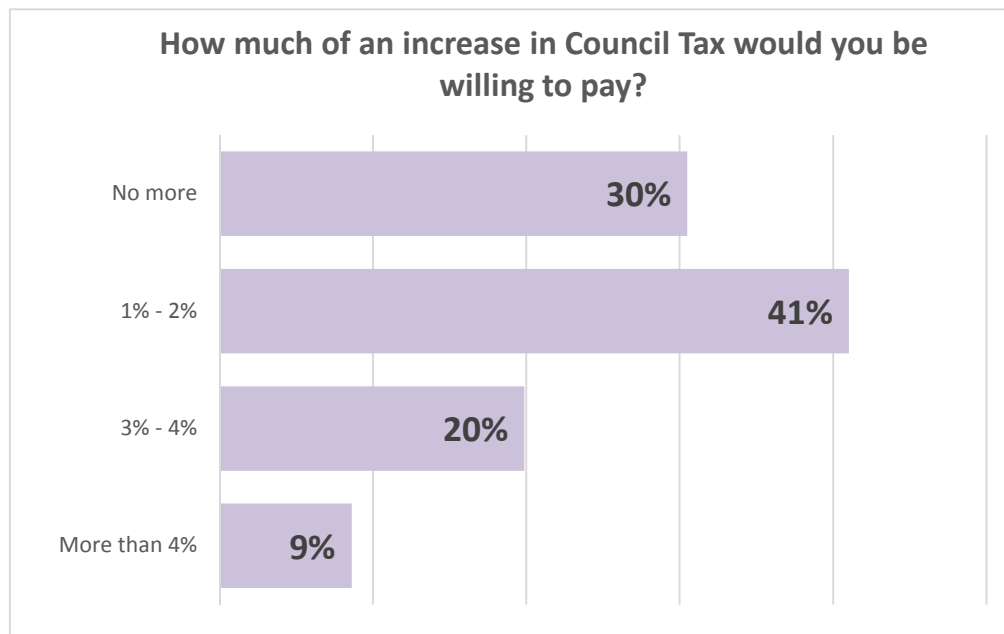


Figure 11: Summary of Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 3 – "If there are any other priorities that you think the Council should spend money on please provide details below?"

4 Views on the Level of Council Tax Increase



**Figure 12: Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 4 –
“How much of an increase in Council Tax would you be willing to pay?”
OVERALL**

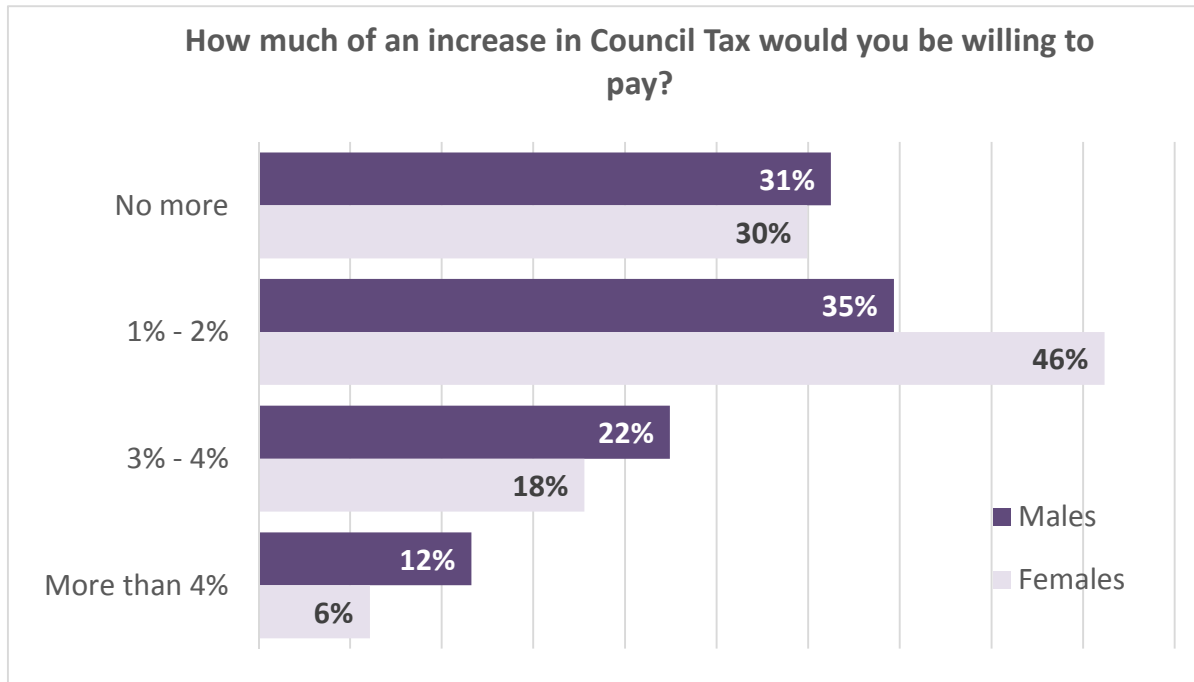


Figure 13: Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 4 –
“How much of an increase in Council Tax would you be willing
to pay?”
BY GENDER

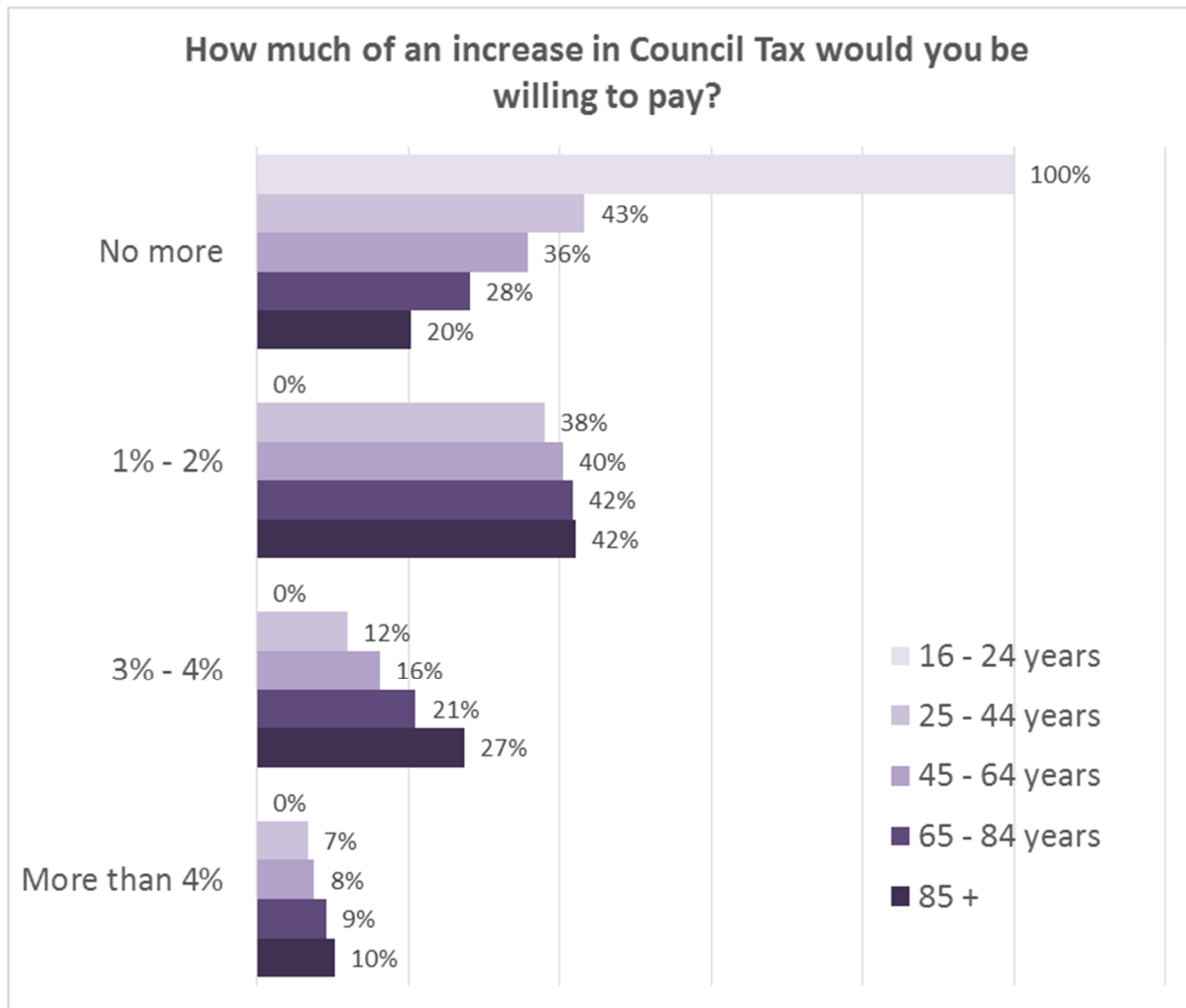


Figure 14: Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 4 – “How much of an increase in Council Tax would you be willing to pay?”
BY AGE

5 Suggestions for Balancing the Council's Budget

Respondents were also asked what they would do to help balance the Council's budget if they were in charge. 5,661 suggestions were received from 4,222 Derbyshire residents.

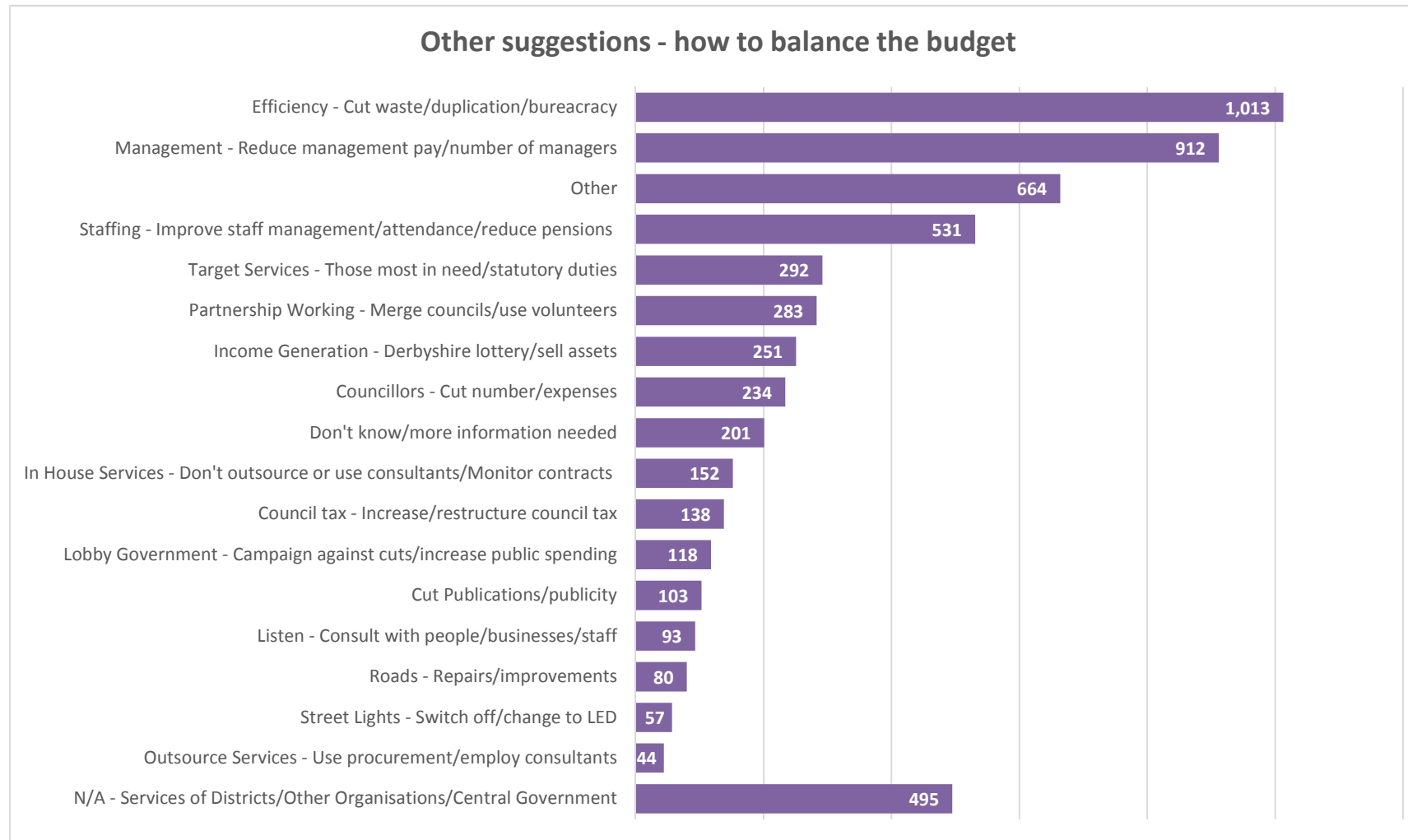


Figure 15: Summary of Derbyshire Residents' Response to Question 5 – "What would you do to help balance the County Council's Budget if you were in charge?"